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# The Place Within

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Rediscovering the Oikology of Places through an Ontological Approach

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## Synopsis

A parallel comparative study explores the link between the fundamental characteristics of the architectural place and urban space. A space that is not closed, but open to possible connections – through the threshold and the frontiers of an interdisciplinary and transversal approach – with psychology, anthropology, but also technology, multimedia and computer science.

The intrinsic unifying force of the place is what makes the resulted space to open up and be the most appropriate for the dwelling of men, because it makes the alliance between man and nature concrete and tangible, as it brings them together in solidarity. Within this reality, the experience of living, typical to the human condition, is achieved in its full meaning.

In the urban space, within the mesh of connected places, other surprising and unpredictable spatial realities open up with their full originality, exalted by the fervour of human presence. This is the constant trait of a city, in all its parts, and it seems to excellently resist the processes of tertiarization and disneyfication that have put the historical centres of many European cities into confusion.

**Key words:** Place, space, link, essential architecture, multifaceted approach.

The concept of place might be framed by different perspectives, but it is on the horizon of architecture that it finds its original meaning. The word, in fact, denotes, first of all, the reality that is constituted through the construction of the dwelling. In fact, when we speak of places, we refer to parts of the earth's surface on which the constructive intervention of man has determined transformations such as to make the natural environment recognizable as a dwelling or, in any case, as a human space. Only as a metaphor, the word is adopted to indicate a non-architectural entity and, in this form, must necessarily be qualified by an adjectival term. In fact, we speak of geometric places, of rhetorical topoi (places), because both in topological geometry and in literary criticism the notion of place is precisely taken metaphorically borrowed from the lexicon originating from the human experience of the built dwelling. Like all the notions that appear obvious to us, and a usual part of everyone's vocabulary, even that of place is difficult to define. A district, a park, a street, a square or a city can be identified as a place. Even a single building might be recognized as a place. Inside a house, then, you can distinguish other places: the courtyard, the garden, the atrium, the living room, the kitchen, the terrace and others. A place can also be the space generated by the presence of a wall, a ruin, a tabernacle, a votive shrine, a bridge, an aqueduct. In short, the places can be multiple, they can contain other places and be contained in larger places; they can be isolated or interconnected, intensely lived or little frequented. In any case, a place is always constitutionally linked to something humanly made, built in order to create a space for human habitation. The concept of place also recalls the idea of a reality capable of expressing its own unmistakable identity, revealing at the same time the identity of the environmental and historical-cultural context in which it is inserted. The places incorporate in a harmonious way, the characteristics of a given territory that architecture has been able to welcome in itself, enhancing them according to human habitation. In places the relationship between natural environment, historical vocations and built-up space is realized as a polyvalent synthesis, as a manifestation of a immanent quality to the natural environment that the constructive artifice has been able to take under its own care. Within the places, the building does not impose itself with indifference to the characteristics of the territory and natural elements, nor to the historical-cultural heritage sedimented through the work and care of past generations. The claim of radical artificialization of the land and the landscape never leads to the construction of places, but to their annihilation and to the relative and inevitable loss of meaning of the dwelling. In the place it is as if a constant dialogue between nature and architecture, the original environment and historical landscape, between earth and universe, a multi-voiced interview where man is always called to participate through the experience of the dwelling. The nature of places is never therefore in the solipsistic closure, but always in openness and interaction. This vocation, on the other hand, is also that of architecture. As the philosopher and architect Paolo Cecere has recently clarified, that the architectural construction of the space is that which puts the human dwelling at its core it succeeds in giving space "a kosmotopic character", that is, a quality that originates from universal principles and becomes concrete, in works that are always singular, in which the cosmic breath of beauty finds its place in virtue of the always fertile

encounter with specific vocations of the natural and historical-cultural environment<sup>1</sup>. In places, adds the author, "Kosmos and Topos, united in the partnership made possible by the tectonic relation", give rise to a reality that, in turn, becomes generative and revealing of values and meanings that otherwise would have no way to come to the light. The resources that dwell in the earth and in the sky, by virtue of architecture, are manifested in a form that reveals latent vocations and unpublished values. The act of building space is, in fact, what, in giving a place to man, gives a place also to nature, both because it makes it dwell in the work, and because it makes it manifest as such through the dialectic that its elements establish with those of the architectural artifact. The latter, when rooting on the ground and rising in the form of a fence ordered according to an internal rule, means that, from the relationship that it establishes with the earth, with the sky, with the sun, with the air, with the seasons, with the natural landscape and the historical one, originates a place for the dwelling. In this way the kosmos is embodied in a topos endowed with its own unmistakable identity. By virtue of this process, we can say, borrowing a philosophical term, that places are the fruit of the maieutic action of architecture, because it is the architectural artifice that makes its peculiar nature emerge, making them recognizable and memorable.

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<sup>1</sup> P. Cecere. Il pensiero radicale della dimora: considerazioni sul carattere "kosmotopico" dello spazio architettonico. in *La qualità oikogena dell'architettura. Lo spazio del soggiorno*. Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, Napoli, 2017, p 29.

## Biography

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